

FACULTY & *friends*

Helmut Brauss, piano

Thursday, October 19, 2000
at 8:00 pm



Arts Building
University of Alberta

Program



Department of Music
University of Alberta

Program

Major works for solo piano of 1804

by

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770-1827)

Sonata in F Major, Op. 54

In Tempo d'un Menuetto

Allegretto (dolce)

Sonata in C Major, Op. 53 (Waldstein Sonata)

Allegro con brio

INTRODUZIONE - Adagio molto

RONDO - Allegretto moderato

Intermission

Andante favori, F Major (originally intended as the
middle movement of Op. 53)

Sonata in F Minor, Op. 57 (Appassionata)

Allegro assai

Andante con moto

Allegro ma non troppo

Program Notes

On August 26, 1804 Beethoven offered the publisher Breitkopf und Härtel the Oratorio "Christus am Ölberg", the "Eroica" Symphony, the Triple Concerto and the Piano Sonatas Op. 53, Op. 54 and Op. 57 for 2000 florins, because "I want a speedy edition made of my works". This shows that the year 1804 was a remarkable one, although gestation periods for his works

generally were quite long. Sketches for instance for the first and last movements of the Sonata Op. 53 are found already in the earlier "Eroica sketch book", while sketches of the Op. 57 Sonata can be traced in the "Leonore sketch book".

The "Andante favori" was originally to be the second movement of the Waldstein Sonata. But according to Ferdinand Ries (as quoted by Thayer), "a friend of Beethoven said to him, that the sonata was too long, for which he was terribly taken to task by the composer". However, Beethoven changed his mind after all and replaced the Andante with a declamatory INTRODUZIONE, which as an anacrusis to the last movement could not have been chosen better. Thus Op. 53 inadvertently became a "two-movement" sonata with a substantial emotional link between the two extended fast movements. In this context it is perhaps meaningful to note that Op. 54, too, is cast in two movements, whereby the first in its contrasting declamatory diction already points to later sonatas like Op. 101 or Op. 109, while the second is in a continuous motion similar to the last movement of Op. 57. However, here the double indication "dolce" in the beginning insinuates a deeper characterization than a simply virtuosic "perpetuum mobile".

The expansive corner movements of the Waldstein Sonata are conceived in a quasi "apollonian" style - classically well proportioned, consisting mostly of transparent, linear, figurative patterns, encompassing the complete range of the piano available to Beethoven at that time. The sonata movement form including the repeat of the exposition in the first movement, and the clear rondo form with an extended, pianistically brilliant Coda in the last are conventional in design, although on a very large scale.

By contrast the style of Op. 57 could be called "dionysian" - a continuous motion with striking dynamic contrasts, powerful climaxes and emotional outbursts in the two outer movements, calmed only by the introspective Variations of the second. Beethoven strengthens the continuity of the powerful 12/8 pulse in the first movement by omitting the usual repeat of the exposition, and intensifies the relentless surging in the last by repeating the recapitulation together with the development section, as in Op. 54. The subsequent Coda is filled with a maximum outburst of emotion. One has no trouble in believing the story reported by Ries, that Beethoven on one of his usual "nature walks" around Döbling was constantly humming and howling up and down, only to explain afterwards, he now had found the theme for the last movement.

(Helmut Brauss)

Helmut Brauss received his early musical training in Europe. Inspired by mentors like Elly Ney, Hans Ehlers and Edwin Fischer he developed an intense affinity with the great European interpretative tradition. It naturally follows that he should devote himself especially to the music of Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms, although his repertoire ranges from baroque to contemporary composers.

The artist has shown his extraordinary pianistic ability and stylistic versatility in many recitals, chamber music concerts, appearances as soloist with orchestra and radio broadcasts throughout Central Europe, North America and Asia.

Once called "a poet of the piano" by a leading critic in Munich, he has eight recordings to his credit with works by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Chopin, Pfitzer, Poulenc and Khatchaturian, including a CD released by the Canadian Arktos label.

The character of his interpretations cannot be categorized; many critics find his pianistic artistry free of any modernistic tendencies, but filled with individual expression and authentic identification with the music he plays. He is also committed to the music of our time. The prolific Canadian composer, Malcolm Forsyth, has written several works especially for him. He premiered them under the auspices of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation - including a Piano Concerto performed with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and recorded live by CBC. He has also written a book on the piano music of Max Reger, published by the Alberta University Press.

After retiring as Professor of Music at the University of Alberta in Edmonton after 25 years, Helmut Brauss - before returning to Canada - served as Professor of Music at the Musashino Ongaku Daigaku in Tokyo from 1996 to 1999, where he had already been teaching as a guest professor intermittently over a period of 15 years. As a pedagogue he is increasingly sharing his experience of the concert stage in master classes on various continents, most recently at the Algonquin International Music Institute in Ontario, Canada and the Aria International Summer Academy in London, Ontario.

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